

James 5:(1–12) 13–20
“It Won’t be Long”
19th Sunday af. Pentecost

September 30, 2018
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Pastor Hartwig

Grace, mercy, and peace from God, our Heavenly Father, and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen!

[Introduction]

The members of the Early Christian Church lived in perilous times.

It was dangerous – downright dangerous to be a follower of Christ.

His followers were persecuted; they were scattered.

Christians were tortured and torn apart

by hungry lions while people watched.

Christians were even crucified – crucified as examples

– don’t believe or you will be crucified too!

And yet, they still believed.

The Epistle of James was written to people who lived in this world environment.

They lived in perilous times.

And so..

The Epistle of James was written to people whose faith was challenged.

The Holy Spirit through James urged them to focus on the returning Christ.

He said, “***Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord***” (v 7).

[Christ Comes!] He’s coming! You see.. .Jesus is coming!

AND This was great news for their weary ears.

Jesus would return, and when he did, their troubles would end.

There would be no more rejection, no more persecution, no more trials,

no more hungry lions, no more examples to be made, no more sorrow.

James was looking ahead – straight ahead!

You might say he was eschatological.

He lived his life in anticipation of the return of his brother Jesus.

James knew what had happened. After all he was there.

James is the oldest half-brother of Jesus (Mark 6:3) and brother of Jude (Mt 13:55),
who wrote the epistle Jude.

James had first rejected Jesus as the Messiah (John 7:5). And...

He might not have been at the crucifixion, but he knew of Jesus’ horrific death.

He might not have been at the tomb on that glorious Easter morn, but later believed (1 Cor 15:7).

James saw the risen Lord, and believed

And with that – our minds recall Jesus saying,

“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” (John 20:29)

Bury the Word of God deep into your hearts....

James became the key leader in the Jerusalem church.

He became one of the “pillars” of that church,

along with Peter and John (Gal 2:9).

[***Assurance***]

And as a leader he wants the church to know...

Christ *is* coming again. Of that we can be sure!

Throughout the Scriptures, we hear this assurance.

Jesus said,

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” (John 14:1-2)

AND Jesus said,

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats” (Mt 25:31-32).

[***Endurance***]

As James wrote, he was concerned about the endurance of the people.

Will they hold on to their faith?

He encouraged them to keep focused on the coming Lord.

AND His directions hold true for today.

The Lord is coming! How can we hang on? How can we be ready?

In the same way as the audience of James:

“Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord” (v 7).

Keep your eyes focused on Jesus.

Being patient means to hold on, to bear up under suffering.

It is spiritual patience that does not give up; rather, it holds on to the promise of Christ.

How do we acquire such patience?

It is given to us...

It is a fruit of the Spirit, granted to us by God through the Word and Sacraments.

Therefore, when we gather for Worship – that is capital “W” – Worship,
when we gather for the Divine Service we do our part.

God does His part.

God gives His gifts – forgiveness of sins,
and where there is forgiveness, there is life and salvation.

And we do our part.... we sing and we pray and we confess and we listen.
We listen to the Word of God.

You see...

Knowing that Christ has come for us,
that he gave his life as the once-and-for-all-sacrifice for our sins,
we can live by the Spirit.

[*Farmer*]

James used the example of the farmer. Like the farmer, we patiently endure.

The farmer plants his seed and patiently waits in faith for the crop to come.
The farmer waits.

He waits until the fullness of time, until the seed germinates and grows.
He waits for the rains to come to water the earth.
And sometimes he waits while his crops suffer.

But he also battles the pests and weeds so that the full crop will be his.
He does all that, because he awaits the harvest.

It is just like the “Seed of the Word” Sculpture in our Narthex.

This sculpture piece – this work of art has stood in the Narthex since 1970.
Today you see it before the altar.

The sculpture was created by Dr. Leonard Schoepp in the Spring of 1970.
It was given to the congregation in honor of his daughter, Deborah’s confirmation class.

The sculpture was created as his Ph.D. thesis for the University of Iowa. The sculpture
can never be duplicated because the molds were destroyed. It is truly one-of-a-kind.

The sculpture consists of six square blocks with different scenes on each side of the block.
The lowest block shows the seed below the soil,
and each rising block shows the growth of the plant until it fully flowers.
As the sculpture depicts the growth of a plant from a seed
so our faith grows as the seed of the Word is planted in our hearts.

This piece of art will be re-installed here at Our Redeemer
to encourage generations to be patient... to bury the Word of God into their hearts.

According to James, believers need to be like the farmer.

They need to establish or set their hearts on the coming of the Lord
—that is, looking for it each day.

This will keep their eyes on the goal of the life of the believer,
not to acquire riches for themselves for this life,
but to endure and hold on until they see Christ returning.

As we face trials in this life,
James urges us not to grumble and complain. That accomplishes nothing positive.
God's Word is quite clear. ***“Do all things without grumbling or questioning”*** (Phil 2:14).
And that includes waiting, it won't be long.

Rather than lashing out at each other,
James encourages us to look to the prophets for an example.
They faced all kinds of trials and tribulation, but they persisted;

Looking for the returning Christ, we will have difficulties. Yes, it is true...
We will have challenges and temptation, testing and persecution.
We may feel that we are all alone, the only ones having difficulty.
But the prophet Elijah proved we are not alone... 7,000 still believed
and had no idolatry.

Don't suffer alone; seek the prayers of your church, your pastor, and others.
God heals, just not always as we like and not always on our time schedule.

God is with us, so we can patiently endure.
God will be with us as he was with the prophets.
He will keep us strong in the faith, as we remain steadfastly fixed upon the return of Christ.

[Conclusion]

Dear friends in Christ, as we see the day approaching, there is much to do.
We will face trials and tribulations; we will be tempted to depart the faith.

While we wait, we keep our eyes on Christ.
He has done great things for us and greater things are in store for us.
So great are they that words cannot describe them.
Keep the faith! Hold on, it won't be long. Amen.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. AMEN! (*1 Thessalonians 5:16–18*)
